

# Poisoning 'Can happen to anyone'

June 8 2012, By Serena Gordon, HealthDay Reporter

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Josephine Darwin (donated photo)

Fumes from two cleaning products knock woman out cold.

(HealthDay) -- It's easy to think that a poisoning won't happen to you or someone you love, especially if you've taken precautions like locking up your cleaning products and other chemicals.

That's what Josephine Darwin thought -- at least until the day she found herself coming to in her bathroom shower after passing out.

Darwin was cleaning her bathroom with one type of cleaning product, and "it just wasn't clean enough, so I sprayed another product on the shower walls," she said. "The next thing I knew I was out cold. It can happen to anybody."

What caused her to faint, she now knows, was the chloramine gas that formed when she sprayed the additional cleaning product on the walls.

When Darwin came to, the first call she made was to the poison control center. They immediately advised her to go out into fresh air. When she started to feel a little better, she ran into the house and opened windows to let the gas out. The poison control center specialist called her back every two hours until he was certain she'd be OK.

Besides passing out, Darwin had a rash from the gas and her voice was raspy for about a day after the incident.

In an ironic twist, Darwin had a job interview several weeks later at the Tennessee Poison Center, where she now serves as its director of [community outreach](#).

"It really was a coincidence, but once I started working for them I realized how important education is and how important poison control centers are," said Darwin. In fact, she said, she had to call the poison control center for help a second time -- when her 9-year-old niece who was visiting thought that the [strawberry](#) liquid potpourri that Darwin had stored on a high shelf was something to drink. (The niece ended up just fine, too.)

"I know now that I need to read the instructions on everything from medicine to [household cleaners](#)," she said. "You always need to be careful about mixing any type of substance with another. Make sure you know what's in both products, whether they're cleaners or cold medicines. Some things can be toxic when mixed."

And how about her bathroom walls? "Well," Darwin said. "I just don't clean them as thoroughly now."

**More information:** A companion article has details on [poison-proofing your home](#).

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Citation: Poisoning 'Can happen to anyone' (2012, June 8) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-06-poisoning.html>

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